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The GREGORIAN REVIEW

Studies in Sacred Chant and Liturgy

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English-language edition of the *Revue Gregorienne*

Bulletin of the School of Solesmes

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February 10, 1955

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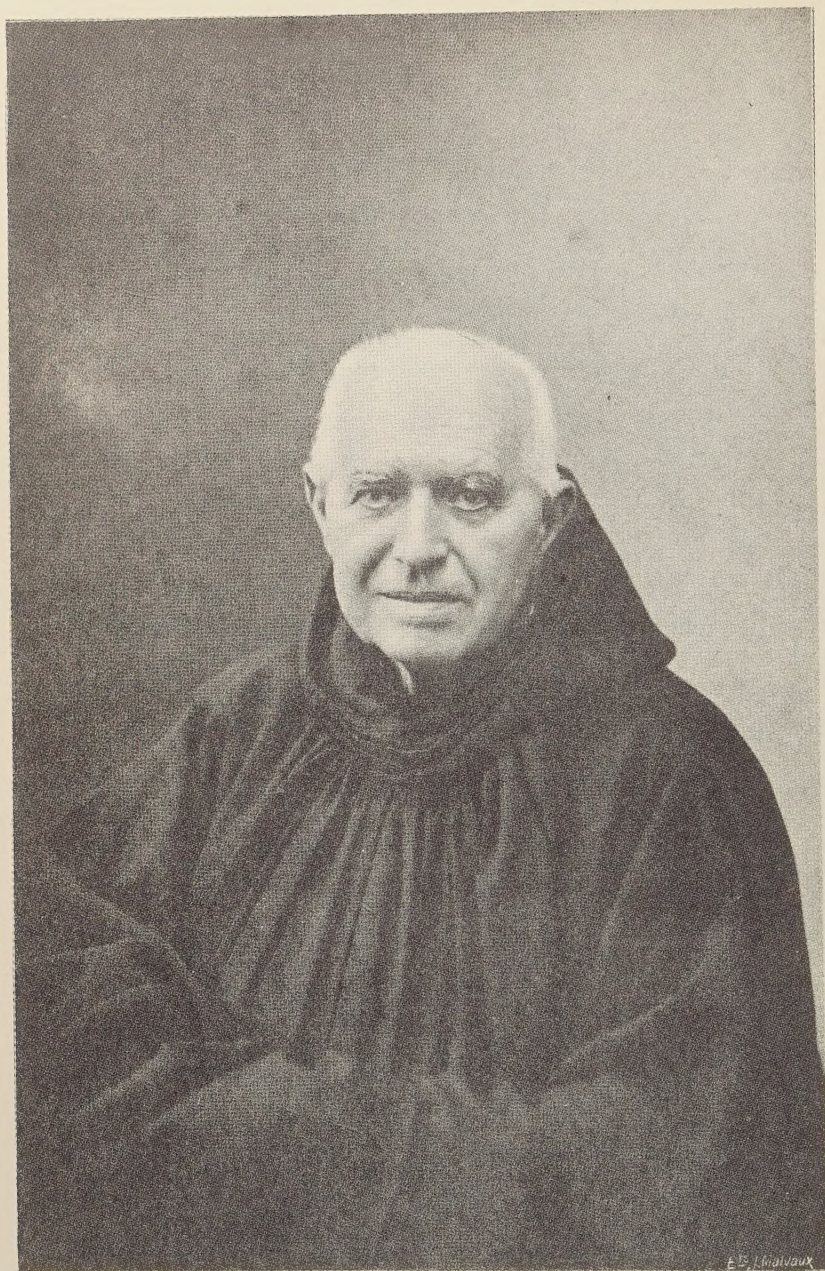
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Dedicated to

DOM ANDRE MOCQUEREAU

MONK OF SOLESMES

1849 - 1930



THOUGHTS IN RETROSPECT

by J. Robert Carroll

On January 18 of this year I arrived at Solesmes in one of those somewhat rare floods of winter sunshine which punctuate the damp greyness of the French winter. The usual feeling of warmth at greeting old friends was tempered by a realization of the significance of the date. As I hurried to the Abbey Church my thoughts turned to the events of the last twenty-five years since the death of Dom Andre Mocquereau, events which marked the phases of growth of the Gregorian restoration which was the life-long concern of that great master.

The linked double doors opened into the dim light of the rear of the nave below the organ loft. At the other end of the slender Gothic chapel the sunlight coming through the clerestory windows on the Epistle side of the sanctuary made the contrast between that part of the chapel and the darkness below the overhanging loft that much more pronounced. The monks were finishing Terce, and their quiet chanting added to the feeling of unworldliness the dim light created. When my eyes were adjusted to the light, I moved forward to my favorite position, just forward of the overhang and just behind the curtained exit on the left side of the nave. That trace of incense mingled with a certain mustiness which is always in the air at Solesmes seemed at this moment to summarize the ideals and the life of Dom Mocquereau, truly the guiding spirit of the research and teaching during the critical years of the liturgical reawakening . . . *cum odore suavitatis ascendat.*

Mass was beginning. *The mouth of the just man shall meditate wisdom . . .* almost a reflection in sort of the simple, direct working policy of Dom Mocquereau himself. The Introit, one of the many upon which Dom Mocquereau had doubtless spent many hours of loving study and research, rolled forth from the lips of the monks, many of whom had stood in this very place in years past to sing this same music with the master who made it live once again. The *Kyrie*, then the long sequence of doctrinal and instructional chants of the Mass of the Catechumens. The odor of incense grew more definite and the rays of sunlight from the upper sanctuary flickered on rising clouds of its smoke. The Offertory was past now, and the most solemn moment of the Mass was approaching. *Holy, Holy, Holy . . .* the ancient *Sanctus* heralded the Consecration. A few moments of silence and then the peal from the outer belfry announced the renewal of the Mysteries of the New Covenant, the never-ending miracle of the transubstantiation. *Blessed be He who cometh in the Name of the Lord . . .* the music which is sung all over the world, in other monasteries, in parish churches, schools and convents, sung in that technique known as the Solesmes method and the very basis of which grew from the work of Dom Mocquereau.

Those who have heard the Mass sung at Solesmes in the serenity of monastic peace by the choir of this world-center of chant research will tell you that there is something profound and spiritual in even the most minute detail of the service. The subtleties of that style for which the Solesmes Benedictines are so justly famous permeates the whole of the liturgical functions celebrated by them.

This is the faithful and prudent servant . . . words calculated to draw ones thoughts once again to Dom Mocquereau, who, although given the care of the domain of sacred chant and its teaching, produced a spiritual harvest for those in his care, truly giving to each in his time his measure a hundredfold.

THOUGHTS IN RETROSPECT

As the Mass concluded, I stepped out into the bright light of the little terraced approach to the chapel. It would be fair to say that the feeling of everyone I talked with then and later that day was that the spirit of Dom Mocquereau lived on in the music and liturgical beauty which he was so instrumental in bringing to its realization. Yet a more considered evaluation of such things leads one to understand that it is really the spirit of Solesmes itself which lives on deathlessly, for a time embodied by Dom Mocquereau, a light among lights, as it is embodied now by those who carry on the great tradition, and as it will be forever carried on so long as those sublime principles for which Dom Mocquereau stood shall be remembered.

THE "METHOD" OF DOM MOCQUEREAU

by Dom Jean Claire, O.S.B., monk of Solesmes

After having celebrated in the course of last year the memory of St. Pius X and the *Motu Proprio* promulgated fifty years ago, it is now a more intimate anniversary which invites us to meditate today on the work of one of the greatest artisans of the reform wished for and ordered by the holy Pope. On January 18 of this year it was twenty-five years, in fact, since Dom Mocquereau, founder of the School of Solesmes, after a long life of labor, returned to God.

St. Pius X and Dom Mocquereau! The overseer and his worker! The Pastor who recalls the reasons for singing and the technician who furnishes the means of doing it! Might it not be the time to try to cast a little light on a question debated today a propos of the liturgy and Gregorian chant, that of the order of the means and the ends, the aims which are imposed and the paths to take to achieve them. We are told that Gregorian chant is only a means of effecting the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy, and since this means lays an obstacle before missionary action in a dechristianized milieu, it must be replaced with another means, more flexible, which will lead to the same goal, the only thing that counts. This is to forget that there are goals and goals, means and means.

The *supreme end* towards which the whole of creation tends of its own nature, material and spiritual, natural and supernatural, is most assuredly the manifestation of the glory of God.

Since the Incarnation this is by means of homage in the incomparable cult of Christ, the perfect Adorer,—*per Ipsum, et cum Ipso, et in Ipso*,—that all honor and all glory be reflected back to the Divinity.

The Church, which prolongs among us the conditions of the Incarnation and the Redemption, presents to God in the course of the centuries the unique homage of Christ and Christians, of the Head and the members, a cult simultaneously interior and exterior, whose Liturgy is social expression.

The Liturgy, ruled by the wisdom of the Church to signify this cult of adoration in spirit and in truth, is thus the public action in which is realized the *supreme end* of creation: the glory of God through the sanctification of souls. It could not be purely a “means” regarding no other supernatural action, and it is only through superabundance that it serves for the instruction of the faithful or for the missionary apostolate among the non-believers.

Sacred music, and it is St. Pius X who points it out to us, is an integral part of the Liturgy. That is to say that without it the Liturgy is not complete. Something is lacking in the social expression of the Christian cult if one does not find there, in addition to the gestures and ceremonies, words and chants. Thus sacred music holds rank as an *indispensable element for the integrity of the end*.

Among the various types of sacred music enumerated by the *Motu Proprio*, it is Gregorian chant which takes first place. It is *imposed unconditionally* for certain parts, and not the least ones, of the liturgy. The leader of the liturgical assembly, in fact, and his ministers, do not have the right to use other music, and this fact is perhaps more considerable than is commonly believed.

Gregorian chant is next recognized by the same document as fully sufficient for all the functions of the solemn

liturgy, and its use is *warmly recommended*, not only for practiced scholas, but even for the people. Does not the Gregorian repertoire possess, besides the ornate pieces which only specialists can execute, some very easy syllabic chants for the parts reserved for the people?

Consequently, Gregorian chant, since it is the music imposed on the sacred ministers, is a *necessary means*. Since it is highly recommended, even though not exclusively, to the schola and to the people, it is a *free means*, no doubt, but a *privileged, guaranteed means*, one might say, *by authority of the Church*. To wish to do away with it systematically and forever, pretending that it has overserved its day and that it is no longer adapted to our times, to seek by one means or another to replace it (only that can be destroyed which can be replaced), would be to declare formally the pontifical pronouncement false.

Yet this Gregorian chant contained in an official edition must be sung. It was said at the moment of the appearance of the Vatican Edition that all the rhythmic indications which it contained (the notorious "spaces" and bars) would more than suffice for setting the rhythm of the melodies and ensuring all the ensemble desirable in the chant. This is repeated even today in some serious works! And, however, as early as 1913 the *Revue Gregorienne* had placed before the eyes of its readers the irrefutable proof, yet unrefuted, of the inadequacy of the rhythmic indications of the "pure Vatican." Its authors themselves¹ when they wished to transcribe the melodies into eighth and quarter-notes did not put the quarters at the same points, and this is so even to the transcription of the example given by the preface of the Vatican Edition for the interpretation of the spaces (Kyrie II)!

1. Dr. Peter Wagner, member of the Vatican Commission, Amedee Gastoue, consultant of the Vatican Commission. (cf. *Revue Gregorienne*, 1913, p. 11)

Thus is it shown that a complement is necessary for the Vatican Edition: rhythmic signs which make the notation clear, a "method" which makes effective use of these rhythmic signs possible. Signs and method are the last and most humble means in the service of the end which is divine praise.

This *last means*—let us hasten to say—is *perfectly free*; no one is obliged to use the signs and the method of Dom Mocquereau. In their support there is neither favor nor exclusivity nor monopoly of any sort. However, as these signs are not placed haphazardly, but are grounded on a paleographic documentation of the first rank, and as this method is based on logic and common sense, there is no reason of any conclusion to be overly surprised at its success and its diffusion.

In passing down, link by link, the chain of means which leads to the supreme end, we have followed the *order of importance and necessity*. It is *faith* which shows us the supreme end; there is no question of argument. The necessary or privileged means are presented to us by the Church's authority whose mission is to regulate everything that is in relationship with the *faith*; there would be culpable temerity in contradicting it. As for the free means which no authority imposes, it is primarily *experience* which proves their sound basis by throwing light on both their objective value and their practical efficacy.

But within this order of *practical efficacy*, on the contrary, it is the lowest means which are the most important, because they condition all the subsequent progress. It is legitimate to think that the lack of interest regarding Gregorian chant which we deplore at present in certain quarters stems from a poor orientation at the beginning. How many have tried loyally, on the invitation of St. Pius X, to "steep themselves" in Gregorian idioms, who, lacking a precise method, have arrived at nothing at all and have become discouraged! How many are there who prided themselves on

knowing only the "pure Vatican" and its only preface as the whole method, who have never succeeded in singing in ensemble and have finished by abandoning Gregorian chant and the traditional liturgy to cast themselves into untried adventures!

It is the glory of Dom Mocquereau, his right to the gratitude of the masses who sing to have placed at the service of divine praise the humble but efficacious instrument of the "method" which bears his name. It had appeared in the beginning as a method among so many others which the inadequacy of the Vatican Edition caused to spring up in profusion. Today we can judge it by its fruits whereas the others have nearly completely disappeared with their originators.

St. Pius X wished and asked for the return to Gregorian chant, but it is in a large part thanks to Dom Mocquereau that this return has been practically possible. The figures are there to prove that fifty years at the most after the Vatican Edition, the immense majority of those who sing do so according to the rhythmic editions of Dom Mocquereau. And if we took the time to mark on the map the countries which have adopted these editions with the rhythmic principles which they suppose, we should see that we had marked in the very same stroke those who have best preserved, with the practice of Gregorian chant, the open love of healthy liturgical traditions and who have best kept themselves free of the suspect innovations which the Holy Father has just restated to the bishops as being "more audacious than prudent."

* THE MUSICAL TEACHING OF SOLESMES AND CHRISTIAN PRAYER

by Maurice Blanc

CHAPTER I
DOM GUERANGER AND CANON GONTIER

I

Prosper Gueranger enters the Priory of Solesmes

On March 21, 1833, a young priest celebrated the mass of St. Benedict according to the Roman Rite in the church of an abandoned Benedictine priory, on the banks of the Sarthe, above and not far from the little town of Sable. The priory overlooked a wide countryside, charming, majestic, and in no way soft. The priest was not yet thirty years old. Born in 1805 at Sable in the diocese of Le Mans, ordained in 1827 at Tours, he early showed great zeal for study and liturgy. As private secretary of his bishop, Mgr. de la Myre-Morrey, even before finishing the seminary course he asked the bishop's permission to use the Roman breviary and missal.

But in 1829 the death of Mgr. de la Myre freed his young secretary. The archbishop of Paris, Mgr. de Quelen offered him the administration of the parish of Foreign Missions. Some months later the *Memorial Catholique* published anonymously a series of articles by him, called "Considerations on Catholic Liturgy," the first thesis of which established the need of antiquity as a distinctive characteristic of an authentic liturgy. Even before the end of this series of

* This is the first of a series of articles which will reproduce in an English translation the unique book of Father Blanc, "*L'Enseignement Musical de Solesmes et la Priere Chretienne.*"

articles there appeared a "Defense of the Considerations on the Catholic Liturgy," a prompt reply of the anonymous author to criticisms which *Ami de la religion* had given, denouncing in his thesis a dangerous attack on "particular liturgies."

Such a decisive spirit in presenting his thought, such strength in defending it, would be typical of the man throughout a career rich in work and struggle: the Reverend Father Dom Prosper Gueranger, founder of the Congregation of France of the Order of Saint Benedict, perpetual abbot of the abbey of Saint-Pierre de Solesmes.

The *Memorial Catholique* (founded in 1824) was the organ of battle of the friends and disciples of the too famous Felicite Lamennais. What attracted and allied the young priest to the ideas of the tumultuous apologist was the enthusiastic cult of tradition. It seemed inevitable that the generation of Father Prosper Gueranger should react strongly against the excesses of the Revolution. That generation listened to the call of prophets of the past: Joseph de Maistre, de Bonald, Lamennais.

It was the ultramontane polemist of *Tradition de l'Eglise sur l'institution des eveques* that Father Gueranger always followed in Lamennais, rather than the doctrinaire liberal of the *Essai sur l'indifference*. As he wrote, "Nowadays ecclesiastical antiquity is no longer studied; yet it is clear that theology has no other purpose." But what a contrast between the superb master and his candid admirer! Lamennais, blundering into the priesthood, never did find the salvation that successive spiritual directors told him to seek in the priesthood against the disquiet that devoured his sickly nature until the end. On the contrary, Gueranger loved the Church, the Roman Church, as one loves his mother, with a child's love, with no limit, no comparisons. He wished to serve her by restoring in France "monks like those that the Benedictine cloister gave to Europe in the Middle Ages

... men of vast genius, original, adapted to contemporary society. Popes, doctors, men of state, all were monks at that period." At Solesmes, in the silent priory that he had often visited on holidays from the royal college of Sable, Father Gueranger planned to "remake quietly a miniature of his beloved Middle Ages."

When he opened his soul to the solitary of la Chesnaie, also then preoccupied with the thought of creating a society of ecclesiastics consecrated to study and 'the intellectual apostolate, the solitary objected that in the Benedictine order there was choir. "I answered," Gueranger wrote later, "that is precisely what made me choose it."

Why choir? Surely, at his age, young Gueranger was not untouched by the romantic movement. The "Considerations on Catholic Liturgy" are exactly contemporary with the battle over *Hernani* (February 21, 1830), and we are not surprised to detect in it pathetic passages.

"Ah, who has not trembled a thousand times to the accents of that grave music, which, despite its severe character, is animated with the fire of passions and casts the soul into a religious revery a thousand times more intoxicating than the imposing voice of great waters spoken of in Scripture? Who has not tasted the charm of so many sublime or original pieces, impressed with the stamp of centuries that are no more and have left no other trace? Who has not trembled to the simple chant of the office of the dead wherein the tender and the terrible are so admirably joined? What Christian has ever heard the paschal chant, the "Haec Dies," without experiencing a vague sentiment of the infinite, as if Jehovah Himself sounded His majestic voice? And who has ever heard, on Assumption or All Saints' Day, an entire people make the vaults resound to the inspired accents of the *Gaudeamus*, without being carried back across the ages to the epoch when echoes of Rome, underground, resounded

with this triumphant chant, while the Empire tragically ending its course, the Church was beginning its eternal destiny?"

Romantic, yes, and romantic too the tone of condemnation against the work of modern liturgists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notably against the chant books then used in Paris:

"a monstrous composition, almost all the pieces of which are as exhausting to perform as to hear. God thereby wished to make us feel that there are things that one does not imitate, because one should never change them."

But there is something else as well. By choosing choir and planning to make the priory of Solesmes live again, Father Gueranger wished to give a voice to the sacred stones of a church built to encase the prayer of monks, monks whose mission of being the guardians of the pure tradition of the Roman liturgy Gueranger envied. It was the intuition of genius that led the young founder to bind the restoration of liturgy to the restoration of chant, and to make the basis of the restoration the actual practice of choir. Thus while in the same period of the nineteenth century, so many musicologists exhausted themselves searching the libraries of Europe and discovering new deposits of manuscripts everywhere, publishing a great number of discoveries soon abandoned and discussing a thousand imaginary hypotheses, the abbot of Solesmes had chosen the better part: choir, the incomparable school of daily chant of mass and office. This is the secret of Solesmes. Its monks have seen one adversary after another, men whose scholarship sometimes rivaled their own, whose artistic education could contradict their aesthetic; the monks won by the practice of choir.

Let us imagine the lectern of the priory church when Dom Prosper Gueranger gathered his first companions into the choir.

"There were neither breviaries nor common choir books; a serious matter for monks whose work of predilection is the

divine praise. For chant books, in particular, there were several Dijon missals, books of Einsiedeln, samples of a seventeenth century edition, finally large in-folios too heavy to be carried. Five or six manuscript leaves, containing proper offices, completed this collection."

It is hard to believe. Yet nothing was more crying than the frightful distress of liturgical chant in France a century ago. The Revolution had taken everything away from the institutions of the Ancien Regime, the new dioceses and parishes, not to mention religious orders, seemed an immense field of ruins in which each one was struggling to rebuild and refurnish using on the spot whatever had escaped disaster. There was no central authority to direct the rebuilding; this seems incredible to our mentality today, where city planning reigns.

We do not realize that we live according to canon 1257, according to which "it belongs to the Holy See alone to regulate liturgy and approve liturgical books." Hardly any other canonical decree has required so much effort from the central authority to become a reality. Until the Council of Trent worship had been regulated by bishops and particular councils as well as by the Holy See. (This explains the diversity of liturgies and the simultaneous existence of mozarabic, gallican, ambrosian, and other rites).

At the end of the Council of Trent, St. Pius V sought to achieve liturgical unity, while admitting several exceptions. The constitution *Quo primum* of July 14, 1570, declared that the Roman liturgy was obligatory for the whole Occident. However, in France liturgical unity was not thereby realized, and gallican theorists claimed for the bishops the right to organize a special liturgy in each one's own diocese. Napoleon even thought up the project of imposing on France the ancient liturgy of Auxerre. The master work of Dom Gueranger, which we must here suppose known, was precisely that of rising against the pretense of each local church to

isolate itself in its modern liturgy: it was a struggle for unity through tradition. We know how he succeeded, and that his success passed the limit he had assigned. The dioceses of France renounced not only their liturgical books in favor of the Roman missal and breviary, but they sacrificed the very traditions of the gallican liturgy, which the Abbot of Solesmes was the first to appreciate as legitimate and rich.

II

**The first discussions
about the Gregorian restoration.**

In 1840, the year in which the first volume of *Institutions Liturgiques* appeared, the curtain rose on one of the most agitated controversies ever provoked by musical scholarship. Later, a well known philologist, member of the Institute, Jules Combarieu, would criticize it pitilessly.

“The history of musical archeology during the first part of this century and even more recently seems like an adventure story full of childishness and scandal. The impression that it leaves on an impartial reader, stranger to any fanaticism, is truly deplorable. Those who for long have been the official representatives of the knowledge of plainchant and whom one could call pontiffs of the style are not satisfied with traveling into lands of chimeras and taking wild dreams as reality; it would be a small thing to add that they are unable to compose or write, that they lack taste, that they are like chirpers about a wounded eagle (as commentators of St. Gregory), and that in their polemics they have shown jealousies and perfidies that are commonplace in human discussions. What is more serious, is that they have not always been in good faith. Some are great mystifiers. I shall prove it. With limitless pride they have, again and again, voluntarily fooled the public, either by making promises that they could not fulfil, or by emphatically proclaiming discoveries that did not exist, or by misleading people on certain questions.”

Let it be said quickly; these warlike traits are not applied at all to the Benedictines of Solesmes, whom Combarieu said he admired. If we mention it here it is to recreate the climate of storm and intrigue that pressed down upon every undertaking of Dom Gueranger. People like Fetis, Nisard especially, whom Combarieu (the learned author of *Rapports de la musique et de la poesie consideres au point de vue de l'expression*) pilloried so vehemently, played the principal roles in this hundred-act drama.

However, storm and intrigue reigned only on the plane of musical and technical research. There was never any hesitation in the hierarchy on the principle of return to St. Gregory and the original tradition of plain chant, which everyone admitted as the real liturgical chant of the Church.

Is it not the voice of the *Institutions Liturgiques* that we hear in the decrees made by so many provincial councils in the middle of the nineteenth century? That of Rheims, in 1849, Albi, Lyons, Rouen, Bordeaux, Toulon, Bourges in 1850, Auch in 1851, echoed by that of Quebec: "Let pastors see to it that Gregorian chant, as proper to the Church, more conformed to the majesty of divine worship by reason of its gravity, should hold the principal place in Solemn Mass and in Vespers." All wish to impose a reformation in the music practiced in churches, and to provide as a norm or canon of the religious art Gregorian chant. The Fathers of the council of Bordeaux carefully define it:

"The really and properly ecclesiastical chant is plain chant, instituted and marvelously adapted to this purpose, that the minds of the hearers be lifted up to the worship of the divine majesty and fervor of piety. Let pastors take care that it be neither too rapid nor sluggish; nor discordant by reason of improper singing; let them take care that with a modest and placid manner, the mind of the singer be nourished on the sweetness of the words, and the ears of the hearers be made gentle by the pronunciation of those words.

Let them be watchful moreover that nothing be omitted from what ought to be sung, nor changed at the whim of the performers, since it is the rule that only what is prescribed to be sung must be sung."

The controversy went on only among musicologists, but with what noise! In 1847 the Belgian Francois-Joseph Fetis, a publicist of amazing copiousness, was in the midst of his studies on the history of musical notation and the origin of neums when there burst forth a sensational discovery. In the December 1847 number the *Revue de la Musique*, directed by Danjou, announced to its readers, in the grandiloquent tone of its "firecracker articles" that would stir the wrath of Jules Combarieu,

"the most important, the happiest, and the most unforeseen news that could be received. What St. Bernard, Guido d'Arezzo, and the writers of the Middle Ages did not know on chant; what for several centuries escaped the research of scholars; what the scholarly liturgists of past centuries, Maillon, Lebrun, Leboeuf, Gerbert, desired so greatly but in vain; what was believed irrevocably lost for religion, art, and history, the Gregorian Antiphonary, is found in the library of the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, where it lay unknown until the present."

Attracted by such a fanfare many people went to see, in the bilingual manuscript of Montpellier, "the antiphonary of the type of St. Gregory, sent from Rome to the school of Metz and placed there for instruction in chant, or at least one of its copies" (as the superior of the seminary would still hold in 1889, when he signed his learned dissertation). Others protested. But the discovery had real consequences. This Montpellier codex did serve as the principal basis of the edition of Rheims and Cambrai, the publication of which in Paris (1851), by Lecoffre, with the approval of Pius IX, marked a date in the restoration of chant in France.

However, another Belgian musicologist, Louis Lambillotte, a Jesuit, was advancing in the same direction but by another route. He was one of those that saw a "copy of the original of St. Gregory, sent to Charlemagne by Pope Adrian I, in 790" in a gradual of the Abbey of Saint-Gall, in Switzerland, codex 359. In surety of his discovery, Father Lambillotte offered his fidelity in following in his research a principle "put down as incontestable by the scholarly Abbot of Solesmes," in his *Institutions Liturgiques* (volume 1, p. 306), and which he enunciated in substance thus: "When manuscripts differing in time and country agree in a version, one can affirm that one has found the Gregorian phrase." From the beginning, we see, Dom Gueranger controlled the battle field in which the Gregorian restoration would develop.

Unfortunately, if Lambillotte had shown unrivaled wisdom in the principle that guided his research, he did not reach his end. Not only did he go astray in restoring the melodic text by putting abbreviations into the melismas that seemed a bit too long (in this he was in agreement with Dom Gueranger, as we will see later), but especially he never discovered the true and sober beauty of the gregorian art. A letter of his to Danjou proves this only too well. After blaming him for "admitting only plain chant as good," Lambillotte went on to justify, it would seem, his too famous *Pastores*:

"As to your principles, we will not admit them. According to us, music is above all an art of sentiment, and not an art of combination or speculation. According to us, what pleases and edifies the audience for which the music was composed, is good. Thus, certain pieces of plain chant well sung please and edify; we conclude that they are good. Another produces the contrary effect; we say that it is detestable. Every piece of music, be it of Palestrina, Cherubini, or Beethoven, if instead of pleasing and edifying it displeases and bores, we say that it is worthless. Another piece, on the contrary, that pleases and edifies, be it by M. Dietsch, M.

Danjou, or M. Lefebure, we dare to call beautiful. As to my own music, I am not speaking of it; I say only that I have composed for colleges, boarding-schools, and there generally it pleases and edifies, as we see from its popularity there; we conclude that it is not detestable. That is our opinion of music founded on the purpose, principle, and essence of this art . . . Since God Himself is so varied in the gifts and talents that He distributes, let us admit whatever pleases and edifies the people and let us only reject what is boring or disedifying to the audience that listens; for, according to us, some music fits a chapel that would be out of place in a cathedral and vice-versa."

Lambillotte here fell down to the level of his compatriot Fétis, according to whom the Church, in plain chant, had sought "by expressing the ugly, a refuge against profane seductions." As for Nisard, the stubborn adversary of Fétis, his esthetic capacity scarcely went any further. In his *Méthode de plain-chant à l'usage des écoles primaires*, published in Rennes in 1855, he writes on page 20: "To imagine the rhythm of plain chant, or to put it better, the principal movement that measures the ordinary and common notes of the chant, one must imagine the tick-tock of a clock pendulum."

Nisard was moreover a discouraged searcher, even a discouraging one, for his work was almost entirely negative. Commenting on the program given him by the commission of restoration of chant in the diocese of Le Mans in 1853, Nisard reflected as follows:

"At first we had thought of returning purely and simply to the ancient melodies of St. Gregory; but this project of religious archaeology had to be abandoned. The difficulties presented, without being insurmountable, are nevertheless considerable: the neums, a sort of musical notation used by St. Gregory in his antiphony, can be read a priori, regardless what is said, but are still enigmas when it comes to prac-

tical application; the liturgical texts are modified in their most ancient parts; new offices have enriched the repertory of the primitive calendar; moreover, the Church herself has modified the Gregorian plan by admitting the observance of Latin accent where St. Gregory had not, and by shortening those long melodic outbursts, that are often placed on a single syllable and make the ceremonies almost endless. The basis of the system alone has survived and can survive: for to wish to bring back the past into the present, to wish to put the prescriptions of antiquity into force, is something absolutely impossible in every respect."

This prophet of disaster, who defends himself from the charge of wishing to destroy from top to bottom the work of St. Gregory, did not hesitate to announce that he could prove

"with all the force inspired by love of truth, that the reforms attempted in our times are real calamities, that people have wandered far from the end, that ardor drags the most serious intelligences, and that the return to the Roman liturgy will cause the saddest phenomenon ever seen."

III

Canon Gontier at the Paris Congress of 1860

Confusion was at its height when there started a movement to hold a congress in Paris for the restoration of chant and religious music. The program envisaged by its promoters appeared June 15, 1859, in a review then published by Heugel and Company, the *Maitrise*. J. d'Ortigue, a specialist in chant but little engaged in the controversy and more a teacher than a research-scholar, directed, assisted by a musical commission composed of Ambroise Thomas, F. Benoist, Charles Gounod.

Nothing is more interesting than the collection of proceedings, documents, and memoirs of the congress. We find

the names of almost everyone interested in the reform of religious music, lay and ecclesiastic, especially choir-masters or chaplains, professionals and practitioners, who having read contradictory publications, had ended by creating a more or less composite personal opinion that they hoped would win out in Paris. But there was not a monk in the list of participants . . . (True, monastic life had not rediscovered in France the robust and fruitful vitality that it has today.)

What is especially striking in the convocation and deliberations of the congress is the precautions taken by the committee not to annoy the episcopate. There was nothing unusual in its intentions. The intention was to treat only of religious music, "but especially of the venerable and ancient plain chant, now disfigured by countless changes that have remarkably hurt its originality, intrinsic merit, popularity, and effect on souls." The plan was to "put forth sound teaching on the matter, and then to set under way rich and docile talents, to guide the generous but unexperienced bursts of talent, to moderate any progress that did not keep in touch with the traditional."

So spoke a canon of Orleans in his opening discourse, at the first preparatory meeting. His precautions reflected the eloquence and civility of the period, but would soon prove opportune. In fact, in the discussion that followed, someone regretted that there had disappeared from the program a question that had appeared in the project published in the *Maitrise*: "how to prepare the way for unity in plain chant when one has it in liturgy?" The reply of the president was not without embarrassment; it was that unity had not yet been realized in liturgy, neither in Paris nor Orleans, where the particular diocesan books had not been abandoned. But nothing equals the actual proceedings. To the remark that

"if the congress, above all, put itself forward as wishing to work to establish unity, it would rally universal sympathy, the president answered that the program discussed is ab-

solutely the same as regards spirit and tendencies; that the question is implicitly contained therein; that there is no member of the congress who does not desire unity. He observed that one should avoid alarming certain material interests and confronting difficulties more difficult than one realized. A member recalled moreover that there is here the matter of the rights of bishops, and that one should show oneself circumspect in presence of this right. The president then put the program to vote, reading it again; it was unanimously adopted."

However small this incident was, it shows the two causes of agitation that would become more and more bitter as the restoration of the liturgical books approached its term. On the one hand, material interests of the editors whom it would be prudent not to alarm, and on the other the sovereign initiative of ecclesiastical authority that must be respected in heart and mouth: these were the two dikes against which archaeological or esthetic, scholarly or passionate, controversies would storm; even today they are not entirely stilled.

The congress, as it finally concluded, divided the work among three sections whose conclusions would be discussed and voted on in a general session. The restoration of Gregorian chant, its juridical conditions with reference to the authority of each bishop in his diocese, its scientific conditions with reference to the restoral of melody and rhythm, would hold the principal place. Especially it was admitted that modern music could not pretend to be introduced except inasmuch as it approached the style of Gregorian, the prototype of the restoration of religious art in the domain of music. In the course of the debates a vote put aside a motion to the effect that the congress "divided its sympathies between plain chant and religious music" (p. 50), so that the final address to the episcopate could be expressed thus in all sincerity on the unanimous opinion of the congress members:

“Unanimous! Yes, your Lordship, as regards the ecclesiastical chant, plain chant, Gregorian chant, the congress has been unanimous in proclaiming this chant the true chant of the Church, the consecrated chant, traditional, the only one endowed with true efficaciousness over souls, the only one that can be called *sung prayer*, the only lasting, universal, popular chant, which could not be taken out of Catholic worship without bringing in a profound liturgical revolution, and without depriving the Church of one of its powerful means of action over people.” (p. 71)

The third wish of the address to the episcopate asked “that in seminaries there be adopted the method that best takes account of the nature of plain chant, of its tonality, its modal distinction, its destination, its rhythm, melody, accentuation, style. We repudiate any method that would depend on the execution of equal notes or of proportional value.” These last words, apparently so harmless, covered over one of the most important events of the congress. After animated debates the majority had not followed the leader of the congress, d’Ortigue, in his proposal to “recommend especially the method of Father Gontier, canon of the Church of Le Mans.” The latter made no other comment on this disappointment than this courteous remark on the proceedings of the meeting:

“May I be allowed to express my gratitude to the members of the congress who felt they could pronounce my name in an address to their Lordships. They doubtless believed that it was not a name, not a book, not even a method they were recommending, but a work formulating a fruitful philosophical principle, throwing light on the important question of plain chant.

“It has been asked: What is Gregorian chant? I believe the question answered. Gregorian chant is music in the state of prose, natural music; its rhythm is the rhythm

of prose, that is to say, natural rhythm; its tonality is the universal tonality, that is to say, natural tonality.

“In spite of the delicacy of mentioning a name in a question of principle, I have been happy to hear promulgated by the congress the consequences of the principle that I have had the honor to develop before it. In plain chant, no more equal notes; no more long and short notes of a fixed and proportional value: consequently, no poetic rhythm, but prosaic rhythm. Which can be translated thus; plain chant is natural music (p. 52).”

Who was this Father Gontier, recipient of this slight honor? The parish priest of a deanery in the diocese of Le Mans, who had published the previous year a *Methode raisonnee de plain-chant*, that had won over d’Ortigue with enthusiasm:

“My approval! You have it whole and entire, Father. I consider your book one of the best, most useful and most substantial that could be written on plain chant. From the first word you reestablished the true concept of this venerable chant, which is, as you say, a *recitation*. Consequently, you are a thousand times right to consider plain chant *in its rhythm* first, then *in its tonality*, the natural scale of sounds, then finally *in its modes*, that is to say the various modifications and particular formulas to which this natural scale of sounds can be reduced. I note this order of matter, indicated in the sub-title of your work, because other theoreticians of our time, and I myself especially, have almost always considered plain chant first *in its modes*, as a musical system opposed to the modern system, then in its tonality, I mean the ensemble of tonal notions that result from the plan and combination of modes, finally in *its rhythm*, its *accent*, etc.; whence it follows that what you put at the beginning, we put at the end, and what is a principle for us is a consequence for you.

“Everything surely depends on the manner in which one arranges the parts of a system in its spirit, and the point of view in which one is placed. But I do not hesitate to recognize that your order of deduction is most conformed to the truth of things, the origin and institution of plain chant, as well as tradition. We, having always before our eyes a musical system, modern art, which always tends to absorb plain chant into itself, have envisaged plain chant in the ensemble of its scientific theory, and perhaps a little too much as *art*, to oppose it to another art that one wishes to impose on the Church. You envisage plain chant in itself, in its essence; you steep it again in its double natural source, the word, the liturgy.”

Canon Gontier had others to agree with him besides the director of the *Maitrise*. His bishop had recommended him to the congress in strong terms:

“Regarding Father Gontier, he has done profound research on plain chant and published works that contain, in my opinion, the solution to the difficulties that may divide competent men. I call to the attention of the congress his method as being both natural, popular, and traditional, and consequently having the characters that belong to plain chant itself. This method is followed in the cathedral and seminary of Le Mans, and the results obtained are fully satisfactory. The performance is remarkable and gives the chant a simple and easy bent, a really religious expression, calculated to bring out the beauty of the melody.”

D’Ortigue received at the same time a letter from the Abbot of Solesmes, Dom Gueranger, in which he affirmed “the high importance of the theories of Canon Gontier. I persist in believing that truth is there and not elsewhere.”

Such high endorsements did not succeed in convincing the majority of the congress members. They thought that “to recommend to the bishops a determined method would be going too far,” while specifying that “voting to omit the

method of Father Gontier they did not mean in any way to blame or show any disfavor toward it." The president added that mention would be made of it in the proceedings. That was all that he could obtain, although he had taken every precaution to make it win out. Doubtless reasons other than musical ones would go against the protege of the Abbot of Solesmes, who was so much engaged in all sorts of controversies then dividing French Catholicism.

The disappointment could not be of great importance or consequence. The *Methode raisonnee de plain-chant* would go on its way without violent controversy. The power of Solesmes from the beginning was the choir, in which, from dawn to night, new monks and new visitors were initiated into an art that found life and beauty on their lips.

(to be continued)

THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION OF GREGORIAN CHANT

PAPER GIVEN AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SACRED MUSIC AT VIENNA, OCTOBER 5, 1954, BY DOM EUGENE CARDINE, O.S.B., MONK OF SOLESMES, PROFESSOR OF GREGORIAN PALEOGRAPHY AT THE PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF SACRED MUSIC.

It is one of the glories of St. Pius X to have restored Gregorian chant to honor through prescribing the revision of its melodies, in order to give it once more the most important position in the solemn liturgy. This reform was based on an excellent principle, the only one, moreover, which was capable of cutting the potential force of any subjectivity as well as any arbitrariness: the return to sources.

Since the research and study of the manuscripts, however, required long delays for the preparation of a perfect edition, the holy Pope, hard-pressed to give the faithful the official text of this sung prayer, ordered a simpler and more rapid work which resulted in the Vatican Edition. This revision, to be sure, does not have all the qualities desirable. It represents, however, an adequate approximation which had the advantage of giving us the time to work for the preparation of new advances.

The respite thus provided was by no means without value. We understand this better today in the fact that the critical edition of the Gradual, announced at the Congress of Rome in 1950, has not yet been even partially published: this indicates the length and the complexity of the subject. The first phase, however, has been covered; after some work on the ensemble of the tradition, the principal groups of manuscripts are set up and duly checked. This initial portion will be soon printed while in the meantime the work is followed out in its multiple aspects.

Parallel to this work of restitution is developing, particularly in certain countries, a movement of practical extent which demonstrates that Gregorian chant has lost neither its attraction nor its power of action. Among the promoters of this movement may be found to a greater and greater degree the musicians who are looking for a means of perfecting their interpretation by basing it on the solid soil of tradition. They know that a musical work always benefits through the revival of that essence which the composer created in it. As the only translators between the authors of Gregorian chant and ourselves are the neumes of the manuscripts, the problem takes the shape of a scientific proposition, that of the study of the ancient musical notations.

Most of the time, unfortunately, this work appears to be dry and arduous to those who want to place esthetics or practical aspects on the first plane, and on the other hand, the paleographers, narrowed to their special studies, have only rare and superficial contact with the singers. This is why, between the cold reading of neumes and the living performance of the melodies, there is a place for an intermediary science which would assimilate the fruits of the paleography, strictly speaking, draw from them, thanks to a suitable method, the greatest number of musical indications possible, and present them to the choirmasters so that the latter may use them as foundation of a continually more objective interpretation.

It has been proposed that this intermediary science be called "musical diplomatics." Not that it corresponds exactly with the critical study of these *acta* (diplomas and charters), but because it presents a certain analogy with this science, its object being the study of musical phenomena transmitted by the notation, in their very relationship with this notation: the *authentic musical evidence* preserved in the graphic signs — in other words, the *musical meaning of the notation*.

Thus we shall provisionally use this term of diplomatics,

and we shall try to discover what may be expected from this sort of study.

In truth, the object of this science embraces the entire problem of the relationship between the *sign* and the *sound*, from the significance of a punctum to the most delicate of the nuances of expression. Without our making too much of the primary significance of the neume, the number of notes, melodic elevation, rhythmic value, we shall study those more special processes which sometimes determine to the tiniest detail the execution of the chant.

In order that the musical diplomatics may be applied from the point of view which concerns us at present, we must find in a single document the use of several different signs for the representation of the same melodic design. If, by chance, the isolated notes and each of the various groupings of notes, *pes*, *clivis*, *torculus*, etc., were characterized by invariable signs, always identical, each to each, we could draw absolutely nothing from them. In fact and fortunately, however, all the manuscripts, of whatever period or country we may consider, offer us graphic variants to study. Some are richer than others, but always there is something to be observed, if only in the initial disjunction of certain neumes, that expressive phenomenon universally utilized.

But to proceed further, two conditions are necessary beforehand.

Firstly we must recognize, in order to eliminate them, those graphic variations whose meaning does not hold immediate interest for us, for the very good reason that they indicate factors other than those of an *expressive* order. For this it is useful to note under which conditions each variety of sign is used. We shall see that certain forms are always linked to complex syllabic articulations — these are the liquescent neumes — and that others are not found except in those melodic inclinations of definite form.

We must also be sure that the various signs found are judiciously used, for if the scribe has taken them aimlessly, according to pure caprice, we can do nothing with them, of course. Fortunately, we can verify the logic of their use by confirming the fact that the same signs recur at the same points in the identical formulas scattered from one end to the other of the repertoire.

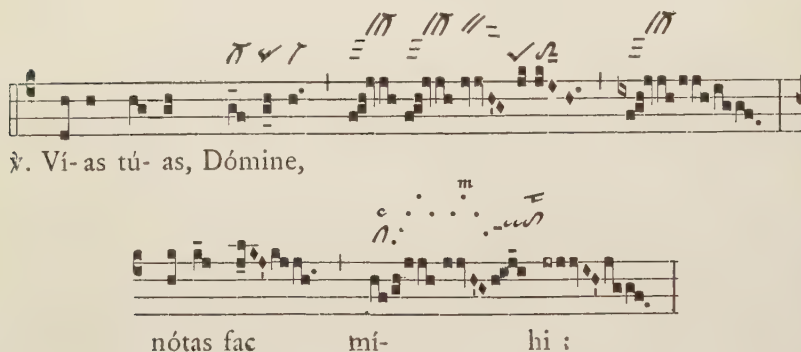
Once these eliminations are made and these precautions taken, the variations which remain before us can and should be considered as *nuances of expression*, for no other explanation which might be given them can be discovered.

Yet, how shall we arrive at a knowledge of the musical expression assigned by the early scribes to each of these graphic varieties?

To answer this question, two criteria offer themselves at the outset; these are the *aspect of the neume* and the *clear context*.

The first of these can be understood without much trouble. Between two signs which represent a single grouping of notes, a comparison can be established. Now that one of which the design is smaller, finer, more rounded, taken under a single pen-stroke, would normally represent a lighter sound, more soft, delicate and flowing. On the other hand, that of which the shape is more extended, thicker, more angular or contorted, separated by several strokes of the pen, would indicate a more stressed sound, a somewhat stronger and longer one. Between the sign and the sound there is a natural relationship which is nothing more than a special application of the principal of mimicry. As a choir master or an orchestral conductor communicates to the variations of his gestures the complete interpretation of the music which he is conducting, the ancient notators diversified and adapted their neumes to express in the clearest manner possible the execution which they heard presented to them. A *distropha* or a *tristropha*, for example, should be sung more lightly

than a bivirga or a trivirga. The difference of expression which has been delineated between the introit and the communion of the first Mass of Christmas has no other basis, since the words in the two pieces are quite similar and the melodic developments not so very different. An even more characteristic case may be found in the verse of the Gradual *Universi* in which the melismas of *Domine* and *mihi*, which are both established in analogous fashion on the same degrees of the scale, are written with very different neumes:



Domine with its more developed melody is noted almost exclusively with long forms, and *mihi*, a bit shorter, with light forms. We must open the famous Cantatorium of St. Gall (Saint-Gall 359, p. 25-26) in order to see to what extent the difference is pronounced.

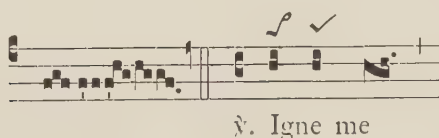
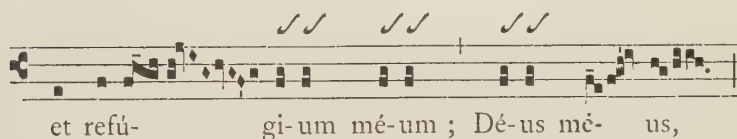
It would not be possible to understand why the scribe selected opposing notations at this point unless it were to indicate a clearly contrasting execution. This conclusion seems quite obvious. It is worthwhile, however, to substantiate it after a fashion with our second criterion, that of "clear contexts."

By this we mean a melodic fragment formed in such a manner that it *imposes with evidence a particular interpreta-*

tion. This can be an entire phrase — more often it is an incise, a melodic peculiarity or the alteration of a habitual design, but the important point is that the musical significance of the neumatic idiosyncrasies which we study in them presents no abiguity. It is hardly necessary to point out that the evidence of which we are speaking must be conceived within the perspective of the esthetics of the Gregorian repertoire, and not according to the seemingly limitless possibilities which the various forms of music can offer.

In taking this viewpoint, let us try to compare two forms of the same neume used in two “clear contexts” very different from each other.

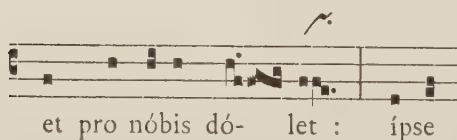
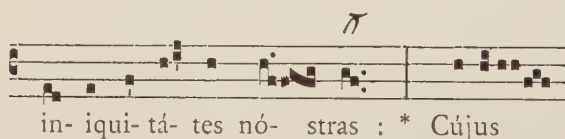
To cite only one example, supported, as it should be, by a host of similar cases, let us take on one hand the succession of rounded *pes* which are found in the second verse of the Tract *Qui habitat* (First Sunday of Lent) on the words *refugium meum Deus*, and on the other hand the two angular *pes* on the word *Igne* at the beginning of the verse of the Gradual *Probasti* (August 10th). Is it not clear that in the



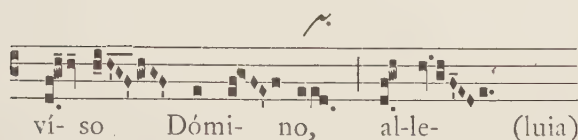
first case this fastidious ornamentation, abnormal in our repertoire, requires a light and discreet execution, as is suggested, too, by its low position on the modal tonic of the piece



and its function as simple link between the two musical accents of *refugium* and *meus*? And is it not just as clear that in the second case the word *Igne*, so characteristic of the feast of St. Lawrence, calls for a particular accentuation, in accord with this vigorous attack a fifth above the preceding final? Although devoid of any melodic development, *Igne* is rendered brilliant by its position and the repeated stress of its two articulations. The usage confirmed in the manuscripts in this case of the angular or disjointed *pes* and elsewhere of the rounded *pes* or one made with the single stroke of the pen, confirms, does it not, in the strongest fashion, all that the aspect of the signs themselves has already disclosed to us?

Now here is an example of another type which shows how one can formulate an idea of the meaning of a graphic representation as specialized in form as the *pressus*. This is a relatively simple matter when one takes note of the fact that the *pressus major* often replaces the long *clivis* in certain cadences. Thus in the Responsory *Ecce vidimus eum*



(Matins of Holy Thursday) *dolet* and *nostras* are distinguished from each other solely by the use of these two neumes. This is also the case in the Responsory *Surgens Jesus* (Matins of Easter Friday) for *dixit* and *Domino*. Although in each of these responsories the formulas which we



are comparing are different, there is in each of them a common element which explains the substitution of a special neumatic formula  for the simple and ordinary form . This common element is the melodic alteration imposed on characteristic cadences for the purpose of facilitating the junction of two incisives. When our cadences are normal (*nostras* in the first case and *dixit* in the second), we find the long *clivis* as in innumerable cases of the same sort. When, however, they are shifted downward a degree in order to be more easily linked to what follows (*dolet* and *Domino*), we find the *pressus*. Thus the *pressus* was chosen with the specific purpose of representing the shift of our cadences. Under such conditions, its musical meaning is brought out clearly, for in the same way that an orator who wishes to alter a word in a current expression in order to obtain a determined effect would not think of passing lightly over this unexpected word but would take care to pronounce it with a particular accent to make it understood that it was no error, but a calculated intention, so, too, the composer in the alterations which we are studying could have wished only to underscore the exceptional element formed by the downward shift. This brings us back to the point that here the *pressus* should be performed with more insistence than the ordinary long *clivis*. Once more a "clear context" forms a support for the conclusions arrived at by a comparison of

the signs themselves. The Vatican Edition, which transcribes accurately the *pressus* with three notes and the *clivis* with two, puts us on the track of the right interpretation in so doing.

When our two criteria support and confirm one another as in the examples cited, one can be certain of having understood in what sense the interpretations proper to each of the compared signs are opposed. We use the expression *sense* regarding the interpretation, for to hope for more and to think that one can arrive at determining the exact quantity would be chimerical. It is a question of *shadings*, the evaluation of which stems from good taste. We here touch upon a general problem of all music. Like all music, in fact, Gregorian chant requires in order to come to life a personal contribution by the interpreter — something which is proper to musical art, something which is at the same time its value and its danger. It is, however, of the greatest importance that this contribution be guided and channeled to prevent the musician from being carried away in a wrong direction and from misrepresenting in a more or less serious manner the character of the work by substituting his personality for that of the composer. And when it is a question of a type of music different from that in which the interpreter has received his early training and with which he has lived for many years, this precaution is all the more necessary.

Thus this is the procedure and the aim of the method: to control in the "clear contexts," which are, so to speak, "forced routes," the meaning of the interpretation already discerned by the comparison of the graphic variations, in order to extend it later to all the cases in which these same variations are found to be used. The nuances will then be more or less intense according to the suggestions of the character of the piece or the immediate context.

Thanks to patient labor, we arrive at a continually better understanding as to why the scribes chose such and such a sign at such and such a place. Little by little we recapture

the spirit of the old masters, and we remain overwhelmed by the number of dynamic, agogic and phonetic nuances which they knew how to note and therefore execute. Whether this be in the unison repercussions in which different neumes alternate with or without symmetry to form the most varied successions — whether this be in the long accumulation in which the *virgas*, *strophas*, *trigons*, the *pressus*, all come to lend their qualities in turn with such diverse expressions — whether this be at the beginning of the pieces and incises where certain initial neumes make one think of indications of *tempo*, or then in many a detail of the composition that one sees underscored by such and such a graphic form, it is everywhere variety of expressions which one observes.

Should we be surprised? Such finesse could not be realized except in a monodic music. From the moment that one superposes several voices, a new interest of harmonic and contrapuntal order is substituted for the ancient one which was made of such varied and delicate nuances. In order to make Gregorian chant live again, a music essentially monodic, we must in every way possible restore to it its original variety. But how can we succeed without the means of this “musical diplomatics”? A Gregorianist who would neglect in deliberate cognizance the indications of the manuscripts would be comparable to a pianist who ignored the indications of the composer in modern or classical music to indulge only his temperament and his artistic flair.

To that one can perhaps object that in the manuscript signs everything is not yet discernable nor understood and that above all the nuances of which we have just spoken are not all equally certified by the unanimous accord of the ancient documents.

It is certainly true that our “musical diplomatics” is far from having said the last word, and it is one reason more for continuing its study. It would be necessary to apply it methodically to each manuscript, then to each school of notation, to permit making the necessary comparisons. Then one

would see the essential points of the authentic interpretation brought out, those which may be found noted everywhere. The others would be considered as less important, freer, to the very extent of the evidence which presents them.

If in the present state of our knowledge we lean most heavily on the manuscripts of Saint-Gall, this is because they seem to be clearly the richest in information. They form, if we may say so, a sort of synthesis of expressive indications supplied in varying amounts by the other schools, and this, too, with a quite striking logic. Moreover, when clearly certain details of interpretation are even borrowed from only one particular school, the others remaining mute on these points, there should be nothing out of place. It would certainly be worth more than an interpretation imagined by one of our contemporaries. For what we wish to rediscover before all else without any purely archeological concern, is the truth and beauty of the chant of the Church in its first form and authentic tradition. As Dom Mocquereau wrote in Volume X of the *Paleographie Musicale* (p. 66):

TO SEEK OUT THE MIND OF OUR FATHERS, WITHDRAW OURSELVES BEFORE THEIR AUTHENTIC INTERPRETATION, SUBMIT OUR ARTISTIC JUDGMENT HUMBLY TO THEIRS: THIS IS WHAT IS REQUIRED BY BOTH THE LOVE WHICH WE SHOULD HAVE FOR THE ENTIRE TRADITION, MELODIC AS MUCH AS RHYTHMIC, AND THE RESPECT FOR AN ART-FORM PERFECT OF ITS KIND.

DOM MOCQUEREAU

MONK OF SOLESMES

by Auguste Le Guennant, Director of the
Gregorian Institute of Paris

Among the scholars who in our times have devoted their lives to the study of the most difficult artistic problems, the Reverend Father Dom Andre Mocquereau is eminently worthy to occupy a place of the very highest rank. However little known he was by the public, his name had been familiar for a long time to everyone who turned his interests to musical questions. Although his conclusions regarding Gregorian rhythmic may have been challenged, and this was the exclusive lot usually reserved for elite minds, at least there was unanimously expressed a profound respect for him personally. His death reduced to mourning not only the Abbey of Solesmes but also the whole Benedictine Order, of which he shall remain always one of the glories. When the news was given out on January 18, 1930, a great sadness enveloped the hearts of all those who, having met him, had learned to know him and love him. They were not prepared to see him taken away so abruptly, even though several times already fear of a fatal outcome had been strong. Illness had so often given way before the robust constitution of Dom Mocquereau!

However, "the evening had come" for the venerable monk who, professed at Solesmes in 1877, had now attained his eighty-first year. He knew this well, he felt it clearly, and he was ready. God, who had foreordained him for an important task, had also granted him the fullness of days necessary for its achievement. These last years, nevertheless, work weighed heavily on Dom Mocquereau, and he lived in anguish lest he be unable to complete his work. The moment that

that joy had been given to him, the faithful servant, which he had been all his life, saw without apprehension the moment approach when he would enter into the blessed house of the Father. . . . In fact, on December 30, 1929, on receiving a particularly affectionate telegram which Pius XI had spontaneously sent to him on the occasion of the golden anniversary of his priesthood, Dom Mocquereau, his soul overflowing with emotion, had sung his *Nunc dimittis*. His being, united to God, awaited the call of the Master in the full clarity of an intelligence which remained till the end magnificent, and in the complete submission of a will long accustomed to the worthy acceptance of the supreme sacrifice. . .

That call was merciful and gentle. On the morning of January 18, the *Pere infirmier*, shortly after six o'clock, disposed to carry Holy Communion to the ill man, knocked at the door of his cell. Receiving no answer, he entered. Dom Mocquereau was no more! . . . His body, yet warm, indicated that his death had taken place a short time before. No trace of suffering remained on his relaxed countenance. While his brothers, united in choir for the Office of Matins, offered to God the first daily tribute of a praise whose perfection had been this monk's work, and with which he had been associated for so many years, Dom Mocquereau, departing this world without effort, passed over to the eternal shore. Of all the rhythms which had caused his ardent heart to beat, this last impulse had carried him to the bosom of God. . .

Two days later, January 20, on a cold and dreary winter morning, to the ringing of the death-knell, his body was carried from the Chapter Room where it had been placed to the Abbey Church. Then, when Mass was over, it was carried to the little cemetery nearby. There the bier was covered and slowly lowered into the open grave . . . these were moving minutes which we experienced with our hearts aching and suffused with that profound peace which the admirable and consoling liturgy of the dead pours generously

into Christian souls. During the whole office the organ was silent in conformity with the rubrics. Only pure Gregorian melody, perfectly proportioned, expressive and supple, alternated with the voice of the Abbot who celebrated the Mass. And in the hands of the monks gleamed the pure waxen candles, living symbols of immortality . . .

Dear God! What have we done, in our worldly incomprehension, by this Requiem Mass, this absolution and this procession to the cemetery to the sublime accents of the *In paradisum*?

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Andre Mocquereau was born June 6, 1849, at La Tessoualle (Maine-et-Loire). His family, originally from Sablesur-Sarthe, was very widely respected in the area. His father, who practiced as a physician, settled down at Cholet shortly after the birth of his son. Music had its place in this home of deeply French culture and tradition; there was a love for performing it, and Andre Mocquereau was at an early age introduced to its fundamentals. His remarkable aptitudes were such that his parents dreamed at one time of sending him to the Conservatoire. In the course of time, having become a talented violincellist, the classics were familiar ground to him. Through contact with their genius, his sensitive nature, which was considerable, was singularly refined by being applied to those disciplines from which spring the works of the masters. Charles Dancel, who came to Cholet, held him in high esteem and was not loath to have him as a companion in the interpretation of Trios and Quartets.

Had he remained in public life, Andre Mocquereau, a fervent adept of chamber music, might have set out to become one of its best known interpreters. God had other plans for him. This early training, without apparent bearing on his

real destiny, initiated him profoundly, on the contrary, to the fine points of rhythm, to the thousand and one shadings of melodic articulation which the bow strokes emphasized. . . This he must have remembered very often in the course of his monastic career. It is here and not elsewhere that we must seek the reason for the choice of certain chironomic interpretations given by the *Nombre Musical*, subtle, perhaps, at first consideration, but so accurate and vital and expressive! For the artist that he was, nourished with the marrow of lions, could not have lost anything of his personality in putting on the monkscloth.

Andre Mocquereau entered the cloister as postulant in 1875. He was then twenty-six years old. Dom Gueranger, of illustrious memory, also from Sable, knew the family of Dom Mocquereau. He exercised a decisive influence on the latter's vocation. However, Andre Mocquereau did not have the joy of being received at Solesmes by Dom Gueranger. The latter was dead three months when Dom Mocquereau set foot on the threshold of the monastery. He was immediately a postulant, then a model novice, and after his profession, a monk of high calibre, of fine example and holy life. His devotion to the Virgin was profound. Our Lady of Chartres was, from the earliest days to the last, the great protectress of his work. ¹

Ordained a priest December 28, 1879, Dom Mocquereau was invited by obedience to work on the restoration of Gregorian chant, the plan for which had been set forth for some time by Dom Gueranger himself. He was then attached to Dom Pothier whose work he was first to share and then continue. As early as 1889 he was given the task of directing the choir of Solesmes which owes to Dom Mocquereau that which it is today. He carried out this charge until September of 1914, the point at which Dom Gajard, his closest collabora-

1. Cf. "Revue Gregorienne". 1930, No. 2, "Notre-Dame de Chartres et Dom Mocquereau", under the signature of Dom de Sainte-Beuve.

tor, succeeded him. We shall see in a moment what his artistic works were and their rather considerable importance. One stands in awe of the power of realization of such a man. But first it was necessary to have the organization of monastic life, so rigid and at the same time so flexible within its precise framework, in order that the absorbing and exhausting labor of every day might permit Dom Mocquereau to manage, at the same time, purely and exclusively spiritual and important functions: master of the lay-brothers for many years, he was even prior of Solesmes from 1902 to 1908.

The years had weakened him physically, but he preserved to the very end that enthusiasm, that youthfulness of heart, that inner fire in his countenance which was the marvel of his close friends. His energy was limitless. He fought confidently for his ideas, and although he received his blows, he gave them back in kind, at times not without heartfelt misgivings. He had the distinctive traits of the great Vendean characters; for him the heart was never absent in battle. The man was of a strong race, and the work of the monk was in that sense felt to be "for the greatest good of souls", for that point was, in a definite sense, the constant aim of his efforts and the permanent motivation of his over-abundant activity.

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Thus, then does the cycle of long and difficult study which has led to the integral restoration of the Gregorian melodies, that inestimable and so little understood treasure of the Catholic liturgy come to a close. I do not mean to say that the question is completely worked out. No one would have us think so. But, although there are still, here and there, matters to be investigated (such as the question of modality), points of detail to clarify, conclusions to verify, the work taken as a whole, such as it presents itself at this time, is of an extreme solidity and carries clearly the marks of a real achievement. Certainly Dom Mocquereau in his profound humility would never have thought to say with the poet:

“Exegi monumentum aera perennius”. But we ourselves can proclaim it of his work and exalt the principal merit of it, even though, to be truthful, we must add that it is, on one hand, the achievement of the united works of Dom Gueranger, Dom Pothier and Dom Mocquereau. One cannot separate their three names without misrepresenting the historical truth. The first of these was the genial guiding spirit of a gigantic enterprise; the two others were the patient builders of it. Each of them had, providentially, his well-defined task. Ordinarily one cannot imagine the complexity any more than the efforts carried out without respite in order to uncover, first of all, in order then to renew the thread of a lost tradition fallen to a degenerate form of art. The *Paleographie Musicale*, the special reviews, have made it clearly possible for the cultivated public to perceive some of the aspects presented by the problem or the methods which the monk-musicians and scholars used in pursuing in the silence of the monastery a precise aim in order to find a solution. But what is known is nothing compared with what remains unknown. It was a question in the case in point of a multiplicity of delicate tasks, in certain instances incredibly painstaking, in which all the factors had to be weighed and compared one with another through the course of years before it was possible to draw even a single conclusion whatsoever. For forty years, in particular, on the initiative and under the direction of Dom Mocquereau, the paleographic studies at Solesmes had taken a considerable extension. They ended by “proving the existence of a melodic tradition and of a rhythmic tradition indicating to the point of detail the most minute expressive nuances, and in showing that they were universal in the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.”

I shall here indicate briefly the principal stages of this reconstitution in holding myself principally to the work of Dom Mocquereau.



Dom Pothier was the principal artisan of the “melodic restoration” of traditional Gregorian chant.

It is not generally known that the majority of the books of liturgical chant which were used in France prior to that restoration were more or less the products of the famous edition called “Medicean”, whose successive avatars have been related by Dom Gatard, Prior of Farnsborough, in his work entitled “La Musique Gregorienne”.¹

These books contain only a deformed and poor version of the ancient liturgical melodies. The latter, emptied of their musical substance by the mutilations, the re-workings of every sort which they had undergone, were no longer found in any but the most skeletal state. What is more, the manner in which they were performed in the choirstalls could not but cast the greatest discredit on plainchant by causing it to be considered by artists as lying outside true music. How could one become interested, in fact, in valueless diminutions, sputtered out by indifferent cantors “like a dead rhapsody”? The Church was in danger of suffering great damage, not only in regard to the dignity of its cult, but even in regard to its very doctrine, through the quite natural interplay of an inevitable reaction.

But then, following on the publication by Dom Gueranger of the first two volumes of his “Liturgical Institutions” (1840-1841), a very important movement of a return to traditional Gregorian chant was drawn up in France. Meritorious efforts were expended in this direction in several dioceses. They resulted, however, only in partial achievements, because of the necessarily severe limitations within which research had been carried out. Integral melodic reconstruction demanded a unified work of greater scope. It required not only the collation of the greatest possible number of sources, but

1.—Henri Laurens, publisher, Paris.

still more a critical study effected by means of their respective given characteristics. It was at Solesmes, under the encouragement of Dom Gueranger and according to his directives that this task was brought to worthwhile results, as much as such was possible at that time. Dom Jausions first of all, then Dom Pothier was given this task. Thus it was that in 1880 under Dom Pothier's signature there appeared the work called "*Les Melodies Gregoriennes d'apres la Tradition*"¹ whose importance cannot be misunderstood. "This book, in which the solution of nearly all the questions relative to the chant were, if not presented in a definite fashion, at least perceived, was the basis of all the works which were produced afterwards for the clarification of these questions".² Shortly afterwards (1883), the *Liber Gradualis* appeared, which the monks of Solesmes adopted for their offices, and for which the preparatory work, by the word of Amedee Gastoue, was ready as early as 1868, two years before the death of Dom Jausions.

The publication of the *Liber Gradualis*, for which the *Melodies Gregoriennes d'apres la Tradition* gave the critical justification, provoked violent polemics. These lasted for years, as long as was in force the thirty-year privilege granted in 1873 to the publisher Pustet of Ratisbon relative to the reissue of choirbooks having as basis the Medicean edition.³ Dom Pothier, however, had succeeded in bringing together the elements of the Gregorian Antiphony, which came off the presses of St. Pierre de Solesmes in 1891.

From the artistic point of view, the books published by Solesmes held, over those called "official", an undeniable superiority. The opposition to them which was encountered seemed well enough, in appearance, to take the shape of discussions of a scientific order. In reality they had their

1. Desclee de Brouwer et Cie, publishers.

2. Dom Gatard, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

3. This privilege expired in 1903 and has not been renewed.

source in the anxiety to safeguard the material interests which their distribution threatened to wipe out.

It was necessary, however, to defend them. And it was here that the public action of Dom Mocquereau began. Succeeding Dom Pothier (who had left Solesmes for Liguge), Dom Mocquereau had no fear of battle. He entered it resolutely and undertook to demonstrate with facts the sound basis of the melodic version reconstructed by his predecessor. *Res, non verba*. And this clearly shows one of the principal and permanent tendencies of the character of Dom Mocquereau: to carry on, above all, objective work. "To seek out the mind of our fathers", he wrote, "withdraw ourselves before their authentic interpretation, submit our artistic judgment humbly to theirs: this is what is required by both the love which we should have for the entire tradition, melodic as much as rhythmic, and the respect for an art-form perfect of its kind."¹ As Dom Pothier himself had never published anything or written anything which did not conform to the tradition revealed by patient deciphering of the manuscripts, Dom Mocquereau held, faced by his adversaries, the upper hand. The publication of the *Paleographie Musicale*, in which, by means of the photographic reproduction of ancient manuscripts, the very sources of the work of Dom Pothier were placed before the eyes of the contradictors, was from the very beginning a master-stroke. Dom Mocquereau enlarged to a great extent the framework of it and set forth in it some of the theses which, later on, would reach their definite development in the *Nombre Musical Gregorien*.

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It will be a surprise to some, perhaps, to learn that the sensitivity of Dom Mocquereau was poorly adapted at first to the chant of the choir of Solesmes. Dom Gajard recalled this fact.² Nothing is more normal, however, considering the background of Dom Mocquereau of which I have spoken. Gregorian chant has its own syntax. The laws of its composition, necessarily complex, from the fact of the various

1. Cited by Dom Gajard, *Revue Gregorienne*, 1930, No. 1, p. 6.

2. *Revue Gregorienne*, 1927, November-December, pp. 203 ss.

contributing factors of which it is formed, offend, more often than not, at first contact, the inner sentiment whose reactions are the result of our musical education, almost wholly founded on the classics. The surprise, the repulsion even, which Dom Mocquereau experienced is easily explicable. The synthetic tendencies of his intelligence could not arrive at, and for good reason, an adjustment to the molds familiar to him of musical material of such infinite suppleness and liberty. On the other hand, his anterior studies did not give him the tools to analyze a purely linear art in which so many problems, and notably that of the Latin accent, were constantly coming up from one moment to the next, either through the melody or the text. And when one considers carefully the place which the sung Office holds in the life of a Benedictine monk, it is easy to understand the gravity of the inner conflict which rose, for the newly professed monk, from the impossibility in which he found himself of adapting immediately to a musical language whose esthetics were still for him a closed book.

Nevertheless, the daily practice of Gregorian chant revealed to the soul of Dom Mocquereau, little by little, although still in a confused fashion, the hidden beauties of a splendid form of art. And as it must in all reason be admitted that the laws which govern its order, however special they may be in certain viewpoints, could not, however, be in absolute and constant contradiction with the laws which condition our music in general, Dom Mocquereau quickly perceived that the investigations of Dom Pothier had ought to be carried much further into analysis than they had been up to that time. It was necessary to cut apart the mechanism to the point at which one would reach the very elements of sonorous matter which is utilized in Gregorian chant. On the melodic side as well as the rhythmic, not forgetting the text, deep probings would have to be made, new methods of study would have to be inaugurated, to make it possible to put together — after how many years? — the elements of a definite synthesis. Dom Mocquereau thus resolved to set himself to the task, with the aid of chosen and devoted collaborators; henceforth his entire life was to be consecrated to that great work.

This was a job for Benedictines if ever there was one! Who can say how many thousands of photographs were taken in the famous libraries, whose most precious treasures, in France and outside France, were placed at the disposition of the monks? Who would hold doubts of the patience necessary to catalog, analyze, compare the given facts of the manuscripts thus collected, one with another? Even were it no more than the setting in order of the elements of such an enormous documentation, constantly being augmented by new contributions, it would represent a considerable physical task which only those who have visited the "paleo" at Solesmes, as it is called at the monastery, can appreciate. For Dom Mocquereau really created at the Abbey a veritable center of paleographic studies. All the processes of external and internal criticism were set in motion under his direction in order to arrive at discovering with certitude the traditional melodic and rhythmic version. The famous synoptic tables to which Dom Mocquereau referred whenever a doubt arose furnish undeniable proof of this,¹ and so marked was the value of the results obtained in this way, as early as 1904, that Pius X made them the basis of the work of the Commission charged with the preparation of the official Vatican Edition which he wished to give to the Church.²

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Dom Mocquereau, however, in the midst of difficulties of every kind, was preparing without relaxation the work which we should consider not only as the crowning of his personal labors, but still more as the summary of all those which had appeared previously on the question. I am speaking of the *Nombre Musical Gregorien*.³ For the mark of his activity was to tend essentially and constantly toward synthesis.

1. "Our young monks launched . . . the recording on synoptic tables of a whole library of manuscripts. Each piece of the repertoire thus had its dossier, that is, its synoptic table, formed by the parallel alignment of each of its versions . . . one below the other, grouped by school of origin, the whole thing arranged neume by neume in columns or in boxes, permitting the following, in its fixity, its variety or its corruption, the history of a neume." Dom Gatard, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
2. The Benedictines of Solesmes, driven from France by the religious persecution, were then living at Appuldurcombe on the Isle of Wight.
3. Desclée et Cie, publishers, Rome-Tournai, two volumes.

Dom Mocquereau was certainly a man of detail carried to its last elements, but he was not bound to it — we might even say, if we wish to, not held by it — except with a view towards a higher and more vital objective. What did he do then, in this domain of ideas, if not exactly what scholars have done in other domains for which contemporary science is justly proud? The work of analysis undertaken at first tended to collect separately, then to coordinate in successive syntheses, in echelons; if you will, the elements on which could be erected in a solid manner the laws of an interpretation, both logical and traditional, of Gregorian chant. But it was important to proceed without haste in order that these laws might be clearly formulated. Dom Mocquereau never lost sight of this purpose. To attain it he found a powerful aid in the daily practice of the long offices which the Rule of St. Benedict imposes on the monks. Subconsciously, perhaps, but surely and by the very natural bent of a soul in the state of permanent meditation, it was in the choir of the Abbey Church that, little by little in Dom Mocquereau's mind, the elements of the rhythm proper to Gregorian chant were put in order. He himself frequently verified this. But let us not be misunderstood. It has been claimed that the *Nombre Musical Gregorien* was a subjective work. On the contrary, its bases are objective beyond all doubt and uniquely objective. But who would pretend that music, Gregorian as much as any other, does not produce an effect on us "by itself"—does not exercise on us its mysterious power of training and education? What then does culture consist of if not that? The completely dry study of sources can perfectly well have as a result the engendering of only primaries. Synthesis is the fruit of reflection, which rises from details to the whole, through the dryness, and in spite of the dryness, of scientific observations. But in this there must be, as in every great work, heartfelt enthusiasm which lends wings to the intelligence and permits it to rise from the specific to the general in its soaring to the heights. Now in Dom Mocquereau this heartfelt enthusiasm was rendered fruitful by divine love with which it became identified. Could one think of a more powerful, a more efficacious bulwark of the mind? The monk, the

scholar and the artist never formed in Dom Mocquereau but one and the same person. One could not dissociate except by abstraction his various activities. As a monk he lived within the cloister an intense inner life and never worked for any but the Church. As a scholar he never wished to assert anything which he had not verified in laboratory experiments beforehand, if I may thus express myself. As an artist he never had but one concern, that of the exact rhythm and the true expression, in an art in which fantasy could wreak the most dire violence.

Dom Mocquereau first began by expounding his thesis piece by piece in the *Paleographie Musicale*, in monographs or in articles for periodicals. It was not until 1908 that, after being anticipated eagerly for some time, the first volume of the *Nombre Musical* appeared. When one is willing to take account of the fact that the second volume of the work did not come out until 1927, it becomes readily apparent that in the case in point it was a matter of a considerable amount of work, patiently matured, edited without haste, and which, even in want of total acceptance of the doctrines of the author, imposes on everyone at least the duty of the respect which is owed a sincere work. The very object of the *Nombre Musical* requires, moreover, that one not reproach its publication with triviality. The problem of "the rhythm" as it is expressed and resolved therein would have been of such a nature as to discourage more timid souls. To bring it to achievement required nothing less than the clear genius of a French monk.

The technical analysis of the *Nombre Musical Gregorien* is outside the scope of this article. I should mention, however, in a few words, one of the boldest and at the same time one of the most fecund of the points of the thesis of Dom Mocquereau. Considering that the living rhythm is a synthesis formed of diverse elements, Dom Mocquereau asked himself whether the complexity of the rhythmic problem did not come precisely from our obstinacy in defining rhythm concretely instead of abstractly. This brought him to reduce

the notion of essential rhythm to "pure movement", to restore then progressively to concrete rhythm within the precise framework thus defined the various qualities which it possesses and which we perceive as a unit, without separating them one from the other except in abstraction. That is the fundamental tenet of the work of Dom Mocquereau. No one before him had carried the study of the rhythmic problem so far. Thus do the conclusions of the *Nombre Musical Gregorien* surpass to a great extent the application which can be made to liturgical chant alone. All musicians can find in it the material for fruitful study and therein sound out the elements of a general rhythmic, refreshed on many points.

To limit myself to that which is the object itself of the *Nombre Musical Gregorien*, let me say that the liturgical melody and text were first examined separately in their individual, and in some respects, common rhythms, then envisaged in their reciprocal relationships and in the conflicts which can stem from their fusion. The last part of the work, which is also its magnificent crowning glory, is devoted to the "chironomy" by which the great expressive currents which flow throughout the piece and give it life are diagrammed in space with the aid of synthetic gestures. With the chironomy we arrive at the product of the work of Dom Mocquereau, at the point at which the details, if they continue to be perceived by the intelligence, are no longer more than functions of the whole to the formation of which they contribute. We have here a manner so perfectly musical and at the same time so completely exact in expressing what it represents that it will be forever pointless to continue the legend that monks, while they are fine paleographers, are, after all, poor musicians. This is said, even written. But the results obtained range themselves manifestly in sustaining the falsity of such insinuations. I appeal to the testimony of all who have heard the choir of Solesmes. For me, one who has always adhered fully to the method of Solesmes and who continues to do so because I find in it nothing which contradicts the general laws of music as they were taught to me by masters whom I deeply respect, I shall never cease to say that we have here, removed

from anything which would be anti-musical, something perfectly beautiful: a transcendant interpretation, pure and free of any compromise with effect for its own sake and confined to the most luminous as to the highest summits of art. At Solesmes fusion between prayer and music takes place in the highest plane, no longer forming but a single and entire entity in an indissoluble manner, immaterial and absorbed in God. Gregorian chant, as Dom Mocquereau understood it and as he defined its technique, is, at the extreme pinnacle of the contemplative life, a meditation which blossoms forth in song, a prayer which is turned into music. Let us not be content in admiring the artist who could produce such an ideal. Let us remember yet more that this ideal was conceived in the fervent soul of a pious monk who was, moreover, a poet, and since this monk was "one of us", let us affirm with pride that France, once again in her history, has served well the cause of God.

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In our churches, alas, all too often music devoid of liturgical meaning holds forth, and sometimes, even, devoid of much sense at all. An ardent home of monastic life, haven of Peace, Solesmes is also one of the high and privileged places in this world where that art, delicate and yet strong, of the medieval cantilena finds refuge. In the shadow of the bell tower of the Abbey church, in that enclosure known well by those familiar with the Abbey, the wonderful workman of a sublime task rests peacefully after his long and arduous labor. May his memory be always blessed by the artists to whom, in the domain of sacred music, he rendered the incalculable service of restoring *truth*.

(from the "*Correspondant*", 1930)

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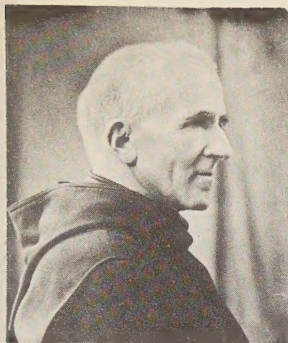
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